



# Careers & Employability

CVs and covering letters  
for placements and  
graduate jobs

*'I got help with CV writing. The Careers Service helps to keep you up to date with recent trends in job application specs, and also helps you to quantify your university achievements into marketable material for the current job market.'*

**Julie Macbean BA (Hons) Fine Art and MA Fine Art**



# Getting started: CVs and covering letters

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# CV GUIDELINES

## CVs - The basics

- Your CV should be a **positive** document which **markets** your education, experience, skills and achievements to an employer. Start by thinking about why an employer should give YOU the job.
- The purpose of your CV is to get you an interview for a specific job. Make it as easy as possible for the reader to find your **most relevant** qualifications, experience and skills. **You must match the criteria listed in the vacancy.**
- Keep to **two** pages, use size 11 or 12 font (Arial or Calibri are easy to read) and use reverse chronological order (most recent first).
- Make sure that dates and qualification titles are correct.
- Spelling and grammar DO matter so check carefully
- Always include a covering letter or email

## A sample CV format

This CV format is intended as a starting point. You may want to use different headings and re-arrange information according to your experience and the needs of the role. Some industries also have their own CV style preferences. For more career/subject specific CV examples check the Careers section of **E-learning@tees** under 'Your School'. For further advice come to a CV session or arrange to see a careers adviser (see page 11).

### Personal Details (you **don't** need this as a heading)

- Use your name (centred) as the heading for your CV plus address, e-mail, phone contact details, LinkedIn/personal website link or portfolio (if appropriate).
- You **don't** need to include your marital status, date of birth or National Insurance number. Should take up no more than a quarter of the page.
- **Nationality** – only include if you need to clarify work permit issues.

### Education and Qualifications

- This section concentrates on **what, where** and **when** you studied starting with the most recent (You **don't** need to include the addresses of the institutions)
- Include degree title, anticipated result (if it's a positive selling point) and brief details of modules, final year project or dissertation **if** they are **relevant** to the job.
- **Note: If applying for an industrial placement, include details of all modules (and results from your first year).**
- A levels, AVCE, BTEC – include results, if they are good, but **not** modules
- GCSE – Don't waste a lot of space listing all subjects. Summarise, e.g. *8 subjects at A – C including English, Maths and Science.*

### Training (this could be on page 1 or 2)

- Include any training **relevant** to your target role/sector which you've gained through industrial placements, work experience or voluntary work or have organised yourself.
- This could include software and other technical skills, supervisory skills, customer service, health and safety, sports coaching/leadership, first aid etc.
- Include where you did the training, e.g. an employer or training provider.

## Employment/Voluntary Experience (Start this section on page 1)

**NOTE: This section is crucial and can make or break your CV. Think carefully about how you can use your experiences to demonstrate your suitability for the role you are applying for**

- Include paid **and** voluntary work, 'live' projects, freelancing etc.
- Use headings which show your experience to best advantage. E.g. if you have a range of experience in a specific field, e.g. IT, health, youth work, engineering etc. group it together under a heading such as '*Relevant Experience*' or '*IT Experience*'. The rest of your experience could then be grouped under a heading '*Other Experience*' and given less prominence, perhaps on page 2.
- Give more detail about the jobs/experiences which are most **relevant** to what you are applying for. Explain what you did and achieved.
- Use bullet points starting with 'action words' (see page 10) to focus on your **achievements**. E.g. 'met targets by ....', 'trained new staff in .....', 'developed a new system to .....', 'increased social media traffic by ....'
- If you've had two or three similar jobs within the same sector - e.g. bar or retail work, summarise the dates and responsibilities/achievements so that you are not repeating the same information. Try to use each job to show something different.

## Additional Information

This section can include:

### Professional membership

Include details if you have student membership of a professional body. Say what you do and what you gain from being a member.

### Additional skills

- General or \*specialist software/operating systems, social media skills
- \*Knowledge/experience of technical equipment (e.g. film/editing or laboratory equipment). Say what you can use and to what level
- Driving licence (or put this with personal details on page 1 as it's often a key requirement)
- Foreign language skills, including level of knowledge

### Personal

- Don't just include a list of hobbies, interests or personal achievements.
- Concentrate on the two or three most significant and give details of **how/when** you participated, skills developed and **what** you **achieved**. E.g. how much money you raised, what you gained from a position of responsibility.

**\*Note:** If a role requires specialist IT/technical skills it's a good idea to include a 'Technical/IT Skills' section on the first page. This likely to apply if you are an engineer, scientist, designer or media/film student

① Address can be on one line

① Using this centred format uses space effectively

# YOUR NAME

Full address and postcode

Phone, email address, Linked in

Driving Licence: full clean

\*Nationality:

① \*For international students it helps to clarify work permit issues.

## EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

yyyy - current  
(or year)

University  
**Degree Title/Result** (if known)  
Relevant Modules:

.....  
.....

Dissertation:.....

① Include modules most **relevant** to what you are applying for

① Include title and brief details of dissertation **if relevant**

yyyy - yyyy

College or Sixth Form  
A Levels/BTEC etc

.....  
.....

① Summarise, e.g. 6 subjects at A to C including English, Maths and Science

yyyy - yyyy

Secondary School  
GCSEs:

.....  
.....

## EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

① You can group certain types of experience together with headings such as '*Relevant Experience*' or '*IT Experience*' first then '*Other Experience*' later for less relevant roles

Jan YY  
to Feb  
YY

**Company, Town**  
**JOB TITLE**

### Responsibilities

- .....
- .....
- .....

### Achievements

- .....
- .....
- .....

Sept YY **Company, Town**  
to  
June YY **JOB TITLE**

**Responsibilities**

- .....
- .....
- .....

**Achievements**

- .....
- .....
- .....

**Training**

20YY Health and Safety at work  
20YY Supervisory/leadership  
20YY Specific IT packages  
20YY Sports Coaching

❗ If you have no **relevant** training you could use this space for something else.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**Technical**

- .....
- .....
- .....

❗ E.g. IT or social media skills - helpful to indicate level, E.g. 'confident user of' or 'working knowledge of'. Other sector specific technical skills

**Personal**

- .....
- .....
- .....

❗ Pick two or three interests. Show **how** you participate and **what** you have achieved, if possible

**REFEREES**

**Academic:**

Name .....

Job title .....

Address .....

Phone .....

Email .....

**Work:**

Name .....

Job title .....

Address .....

Phone .....

Email .....

❗ Put *Referees* on separate page if space is a problem. Academic referee should ideally be from University.

## YASSER HUSSAIN

Example CV

23 Hardy Street, Middlesbrough, TS1 7RD

[www.linkedin.com/in/yasserhussain](http://www.linkedin.com/in/yasserhussain)

[yhussain@fastmail.com](mailto:yhussain@fastmail.com) +44 (0)7783 493024

Driving licence – full, clean

### EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

20YY – current Teesside University  
**BA (Hons) Business Management predicted (2.2)**

**Modules include:** Work and organisational strategy, HR: Contemporary issues, Leadership and Mentoring, Leading Strategic change, Business Dynamics and Problem Solving, Finance and Business Operations, Digital Marketing Strategy, Project Management, Emerging technologies for Enterprise

Dissertation: '*Training and its impact on staff motivation*' based on research during my placement year at Lincolnshire County Council

20YY – 20YY Durham Sixth Form College  
**A levels:** Applied Business (B), Computing (C)  
AS Psychology (D)

20YY – 20YY St Hilda's School, Durham  
**GCSEs:** 9 subjects A – C including Maths (A), English Language and Literature (B) and Biology (B)

### BUSINESS EXPERIENCE

July 20YY – June 20YY Lincolnshire County Council (Placement year)  
**Administrator (Human Resources Department)**

- Provided general administrative support for a busy HR office, specifically in employee records, benefits and new starters.
- Designed and created computerised system for storing staff training records using Microsoft Access and Excel
- Organised and delivered training for 16 staff in using the new system and created a simple user guide
- Produced weekly IT reports for management

#### **Achievements:**

- Ensured the system was up and running ahead of schedule
- Management reported that implementing the new system had greatly improved monitoring and planning of staff training
- Received excellent feedback from staff following training and introduction of the user guide.

Nov 20YY – ASDA Superstore, Stockton  
May 20YY **Team Leader (part time)**

- Supervised a team of 10 retail assistants per shift in busy store
- Organised the rotas, responding to individual needs
- Trained new staff in till procedures and customer service
- Resolved staff issues and customer problems as they arose
- Carried out administrative duties related to shift management and stock control.

#### **Achievements**

- Promoted from retail assistant to team leader after 3 months
- My team regularly achieved 'Team of the Month' for receiving fewest customer complaints and meeting checkout targets.

### **OTHER EXPERIENCE**

October Teesside University  
20YY to date **Student Programme Adviser**

- Attend panel events and contribute to the evaluation of current academic programmes under review and the approval of new programmes
- Gaining valuable team work skills working alongside University staff, academics and external practitioners in the process of driving change in the University

### **TRAINING**

20YY Lincolnshire County Council in-house training

- Health and Safety in the workplace, parts 1 and 2
- Microsoft Word and Excel Foundation and Intermediate
- First Aid at Work

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Technical

- Excellent knowledge of Microsoft Excel, Word and PowerPoint
- Working knowledge of Publisher and Access
- Confident using Facebook and Twitter in a professional context

Personal

- Keep fit by attending the gym and training with my local running club twice a week. Completed the Great North run in 20YY and 20YY raising £800 for Butterwick Hospice.
- Represented school and college at hockey and currently Vice Captain of the University Men's Hockey team

**References:** Available on request

## Covering letter/email guidelines

Your covering letter or email needs to make a strong, professional first impression. Don't send a standard letter; **tailor** it to the job/company so that they can start to see how well **you** match **their** criteria in terms of experience, skills and qualities, how valuable you'll be to them and how enthusiastic you are about working for them.

The example on the next page is based on the following recommended format:

### Introductory paragraph

- Write to a named person, if possible, rather than Dear Sir/Madam
- Make clear which vacancy you're applying for and where/when you saw it advertised.
- Give brief details about your present circumstances, e.g. you are a final year student on xxx degree.
- **Speculative letter** - say what sort of role you are interested in. If you are looking for a placement say what you'd like to do, when and how long for and what skills you hope to develop. If you're willing to do unpaid work say so.

### Main body of the letter

This section is your big chance to be positive and enthusiastic and show your suitability for the job:

- Include 3 or 4 points about your relevant strengths, skills and experience and give supporting evidence to show how/where you have developed them. These are your '*key selling points*'.
- **Be specific.** E.g. if you have supervised staff, how many; if you have managed a budget, how much; if you can use specialist software, say what it is.
- Use bullet points to break up this section and draw the reader's eye to the relevant parts.
- **Speculative letter** – When you don't have a vacancy to analyse you need to research the skills required or look at job profiles in the '*Jobs and work experience*' section of [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk). Also, look on the company's website for the skills they want.

### Closing Paragraph

- Your opportunity to say why you are attracted to this particular company and what value you can bring.
- Show you've researched the company and that you know what they do, who their clients/customers are, etc.
- Finish on a positive note.
- **Speculative letter** – Say what you are going to do next – e.g. that you will follow up your letter with a phone call within x days.

### General

- If you are sending a formal letter include your address at the top right and the employer's address on the left.
- Keep to one page of A4 and check spelling, grammar and punctuation
- Close your letter correctly: Dear Mr Bloggs.....Yours sincerely OR Dear Sir.....Yours faithfully

23 Hardy Street  
Middlesbrough  
TS1 7RD

Ms J Green  
HR Manager  
Green Business Services  
Middlesbrough  
TS1 2BX

10 November 20YY

Dear Ms Green

**Application: Graduate Trainee HR Manager**

I am interested in the above post, which was advertised on the Teesside University Careers Service website. I will complete my degree in Business Management at Teesside University in May 20YY, and am now looking for a position where I can develop my career in Human Resources.

I include my CV and would like to draw your attention to the following points, which I believe to be particularly relevant to my application.

- **Human Resources/Training experience** – During my placement year with Lincolnshire CC I gained administrative experience, dealing with employee records, the on-boarding process for new starters and the introduction of the 'Cycle to Work' scheme. In addition I organised and delivered training, for 16 staff, on how to use the new computerised system I had developed and received positive feedback from all staff.
- **Supervisory experience** – As Team Leader at ASDA Superstore, I have 15 months experience in a supervisory role. I organised the rotas for 6 staff, trained new starters and carried out performance development reviews.
- **IT skills** – I successfully designed and set up a new online system for storing staff training records using Microsoft Access and Excel. I also produced IT reports for management and attended training courses in Outlook and Excel.

Since my placement I have been motivated to develop my career in Human Resources. I met colleagues from your company at the Careers Fair and was attracted by the range of work offered, the opportunity for early responsibility and ongoing professional development. I hope my application will be of interest and look forward to discussing the post at an interview.

Yours sincerely

Yasser Hussain  
—

Yasser Hussain

## CV/LETTER ACTION WORDS

<b>COMMUNICATION</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>TEACHING AND HELPING</b>	<b>TECHNICAL</b>
Arranged	Administered	Advised	Adapted
Authored	Analysed	Aided	Applied
Collaborated	Appointed	Answered	Assembled
Communicated	Approved	Assisted	Built
Consulted	Assigned	Clarified	Computed
Corresponded	Attained	Coached	Debugged
Debated	Authorised	Contributed	Designed
Defined	Chaired	Demonstrated	Developed
Discussed	Coordinated	Educated	Directed
Drafted	Decided	Encouraged	Established
Edited	Delegated	Evaluated	Fashioned
Explained	Directed	Explained	Founded
Interacted	Established	Facilitated	Illustrated
Interpreted	Executed	Guided	Invented
Interviewed	Implemented	Helped	Modelled
Joined	Increased	Informed	Originated
Listened	Led	Assisted	Performed
Marketed	Managed	Instilled	Shaped
Mediated	Motivated	Instructed	Solved
Moderated	Organised	Motivated	
Negotiated	Oversaw	Persuaded	<b>CREATIVE</b>
Observed	Planned	Resolved	Acted
Participated	Presented	Simplified	Built
Persuaded	Prioritised	Supported	Composed
Presented	Reorganised	Taught	Constructed
Publicised	Reviewed	Trained	Created
Reported	Scheduled	Tutored	Customised
Responded	Set up	Volunteered	Designed
Translated	Supervised		Developed
Wrote		<b>RESEARCH</b>	Directed
		Analysed	Edited
<b>CLERICAL</b>	<b>FINANCIAL</b>	Collected	Established
Arranged	Administered	Compared	Founded
Catalogued	Adjusted	Conducted	Illustrated
Classified	Allocated	Criticised	Invented
Collected	Analysed	Detected	Modelled
Compiled	Appraised	Determined	Originated
Filed	Audited	Diagnosed	Performed
Organised	Balanced	Evaluated	Redesigned
Prepared	Budgeted	Examined	Shaped
Processed	Calculated	Experimented	Solved
Recorded	Estimated	Formulated	
Scheduled	Forecasted	Gathered	
	Projected	Inspected	
	Qualified	Invented	
	Reconciled	Measured	
		Searched	
		Tested	

## Personal Profile

### What is it?

A statement of no more than 2 or 3 sentences placed just below your personal details. It can be just a brief summary of your current situation, your skills and experience or it could also include a statement about the type of role you are looking for.

### Should I include a personal profile on my CV?

It's up to you. Some employers look favourably upon them but others do not and you are unlikely to know either way. If you do choose to include one it *must* be well-written, informative and personal to you. Ask yourself whether your profile is adding anything to your CV. And remember that your CV will normally be accompanied by a covering letter, which may cover much of what we would expect to see in a personal profile so don't be tempted to just regurgitate it. (Exceptions to this may be if you are sending your CV to agencies or taking copies to careers fairs to hand to employers.)

### Writing a personal profile

Your profile is a chance for you to sum up your key strengths, experience and ambitions so that employers gain a positive impression of you before they read the rest of your CV. It should not consist of a long list of the skills you think the employer will expect you to have, particularly those that don't appear to bear any relation to the experience outlined on your CV. (For example, claiming that you have inspirational leadership skills won't impress if the rest of your CV doesn't mention that you have led anybody.)

It is a good idea to start with a statement about your current status, for example "A final year Accounting and Finance undergraduate..." or "A second year Computer Games Design student..."

Next give them a bit more information about yourself, for example "...with 2 years experience in a target driven customer service role" or "...with strong C++ programming skills".

A sentence outlining your genuine key strengths might come next, ideally putting them in context, e.g. "Throughout my work experience I have proved myself to be hardworking, creative and a supportive team member".

If you are including a career objective try to make it focused and don't sound too choosy. A statement like "I am seeking a high profile organisation where I can develop a successful management career" is meaningless.

*Remember* to focus your profile to the specific job that you are applying for, so that it emphasises skills and experiences that are relevant to that job. Use the person specification, if there is one, to identify these. Otherwise ask a careers adviser to help you.

*Avoid clichés* such as "A highly motivated team player with excellent communication skills."

## CV Development - Further help

### Presentation

If you feel you need more in-depth information about how to create a CV for student placements or graduate jobs why not attend one of our CV sessions? This includes in-depth discussion and advice and analysis of what makes an effective CV. You won't, however, be able to get individual advice on your CV at the session - see below for how to get this.

For details of dates and times of all our upcoming events check [www.tees.ac.uk/careers](http://www.tees.ac.uk/careers) and click on 'Events'.

### One-to-one advice

To make a 40-minute appointment to discuss your CV with a careers adviser or a graduate recruitment consultant, go to [www.tees.ac.uk/careers](http://www.tees.ac.uk/careers).

To get quick feedback on your CV come to a drop in session. You will have up to 15 minutes and should remember to bring a paper copy of your CV. You can find out about drop in times at [www.tees.ac.uk/careers](http://www.tees.ac.uk/careers).

### Career/subject specific CV examples

You'll find further CV examples and video clips in the *Careers* section of E-learning@tees. Click the *Careers* link in *My Organisations* then view the following links:

- *Applying for jobs* - video with CV tips from employers and other examples
- *Your School* - where you will find CV examples related to specific career areas such as health, engineering, design and media, humanities.



# STUDENT FUTURES



Careers &  
Employability

Website: [www.tees.ac.uk/careers](http://www.tees.ac.uk/careers)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/TeessideUniversityCareersService](https://www.facebook.com/TeessideUniversityCareersService)

Last updated on 01/10/2018